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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT Ex-Private Farmer's Comments on New Agricultural Regulations/Comparable Lot of Sovkhoz Workers, Kolkhoz Workers and Private Farmhands/Prospects of Agricultural Crisis.

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"Czechoslovakia agricultural workers may be divided into three categories:

- (a) Private farmers.
- (b) Employees of State-owned farms (sovkhozes).
- (c) Members of kolkhozes. Though officially these are 'free' farmers who have 'chosen voluntarily' the various types of cooperative farming, they are actually just kolkhoz employees.

"Although in the past under the Communist system the situation of Czechoslovakian agricultural workers has been difficult, the new decrees issued since January 1953 have changed their lives profoundly. (I left Czechoslovakia in February 1953).

New Sovkhoz Regulations

"Pursuant to these new regulations workers employed by State-owned farms (sovkhozes):

- (a) May now receive payments in cash only. All reimbursements in kind have been discontinued. The average pay for one hour's work is 12-16 Kc depending on the type of work performed. Women and auxiliary laborers receive 12 Kc per hour. Skilled workers, such as a tractor driver or a farm machine mechanic, receive up to 16 Kc per hour. On the basis of this hourly pay, workers on State farms earn an average of 2,500 to 3,500 Kc per month. Since 1 January 1953 all special premiums for overtime and for work on Sundays and holidays have been abolished. Formerly, overtime hours paid 25% more than regular hours, work on Sundays 50% more, and work on such holidays as Whitman 100% more.

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- (b) May each raise one to three pigs and some chickens. For each hen 50 eggs must be delivered to the State as the annual quota. The calculation of compulsory deliveries for the pigs is more complicated. From the first pig slaughtered during the year the worker has to deliver at least 7 kg. skin and 9 kg. of (melted) lard. When slaughtering the second pig he has to deliver 12 kg. of lard; the deliveries increase proportionately. It should be noted here that 100 kg. of live-weight pig yields:

7-9 kg. skin,	55 kg. meat
17 kg. raw fat,	5 kg. bones
15 kg. unusable waste.	

A normal pig, about one year old, weighs about 120 kg. It is very exceptional that an agricultural worker can raise a pig for a longer period. In view of this it seems clear that the difference between the actual yield and the delivery quota (i.e. the amount the worker can keep for himself) is negligible.

From the 17 kg. of raw fat, about 13-14 kg. of melted lard can be gained. This means that approximately 75% of the pure fat obtained from one slaughtered pig has to be delivered to the State at the official price of 44 Kopek per kg. - the prevailing price on the free market is 450 Kopek per kg. This means that the Sovkhoz worker receives for his lard only 1/10 of the amount he could get if he were allowed to sell it on the free market. Clearly, it would be a gross miscalculation on the part of the worker to slaughter a second pig within the same year since he would be obliged to surrender practically all its melted lard to the State.

Agricultural workers who raise pigs lose their fat and meat ration coupons. In other words, for taking the risk and all the trouble of raising a pig, a Sovkhoz loses his ration cards and is allowed to keep for himself only slightly more fat and meat than other people receive on their rations.

- (c) Are each allocated a small strip of land by the sovkhos - but just enough to grow some vegetables for personal consumption.
- (d) Must supply corn in order to receive bread coupons. This corn they have to buy from the State farm stocks. They pay, however, not the 'quota' price (i.e. the price the State farm pays to the farmer for the corn quota), but the so-called 'free amount above quota' price (i.e. the somewhat higher price the State farm pays to farmers if they deliver surplus corn above their established delivery quota). For example, for rye a sovkhos worker must pay not 250 Kopek per 100 Kg. ('quota' price), but 360 Kopek per 100 Kg. 'above quota' price).

#### Lot of Sovkhoz Workers vs. Private Seasonal Farmhands

4. "It is interesting to compare the lot of sovkhos workers (under these new regulations) with that of agricultural workers employed by private farmers and 'kulaks' (rich private farmers). Private farmers are not allowed to employ farmhands all year round, only during the most busy season. Such seasonal workers employed by private farmers receive:

- (a) An hourly wage of 10-15 Kopek. This is the pay of skilled workers, such as tractor drivers and mechanics.
- (b) A second breakfast, a hot military meal, and a hearty snack in the afternoon.
- (c) A special harvesting premium in 1955.

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Thus a seasonal worker employed by a 'kulak' usually works not more than four months in a year. Nevertheless, his earnings during those four months can go as high as 24,000 Kc. (if he is a skilled worker). In contrast, a worker employed in a similar capacity by a State farm must work at least seven full months to reach a similar income. The only advantage the State farm worker has is his yearly contract; seasonal workers employed by private farmers never know when and where they will work next. Nevertheless, this one factor - security - is not sufficient incentive to attract large numbers of workers. Sovkholes are always short of manpower.

#### Sovkhoz Brigade System

5. "Consequently, the sovkhoses are compelled to enlist the help of labor brigades, forcibly recruited from among workers of nearby factories. It is not exceptional for such industrial workers to be forced to do brigade work on a State-farm right after finishing their factory shift. Such labor brigades are consequently of little value, not only because the workers are tired after a full day's work at the factory, but mainly because this work has been forced upon them. In addition they usually have no experience in farm work and cannot even acquire such skill because the factories assign workers to the brigades according to a rotation scheme. Although the rotation system makes the labor obligation somewhat more tolerable for the factory workers, it does not help the quality of brigade work. The State farms have to train brigade members from the very beginning. By the time these persons have at least some experience, they are rotated and new inexperienced factory workers replace them. Because brigades of school and university students usually stay for longer periods, they are of more value.
6. "The main advantage of this brigade system to the State farms is that they do not pay the wages of brigade workers. The wages are paid by the factories from which the workers come. This represents an additional financial hardship for industry.

#### Food Regulations for Private Farmers

7. "Private farmers will encounter in 1954 additional difficulties in providing food for their seasonal workers. Since January 1954 special control-books (Prukaz Volnoho Nakupa) have been introduced in which are registered all food purchases made by private farmers. Furthermore, each private farmer has to register with one State owned grocery store, where a special registration card is maintained for him and his family. He cannot make purchases in any other store. All his purchases must be registered in his book and on the card.
8. "A private farmer may buy the following amounts of food each week:

(Note: Commodities are allocated either per person or for a whole family unit. No consideration is given for additional persons who may live with the farmer: employees who live in the house, other persons who are not a member of the family, etc.)

Commodity	Allocation	
	Per Person	Per Family
Sugar		10 kg. per week
Eggs	10 per week	
Fat	1 kg. per week	
Meat	1 kg. per week	
Oranges		1 kg. per month
Cocoa		100 gr. per month

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Commodity	Allocations	
	Per Person:	Per Family:
Chocolate	100 gr. (for children only) per week	
Coffee	50 gr. (for adults only) per week	
Rice	0.30 kg. per week	
Laundry soap		2 bars per month
Toilet Soap	(only for households with children)	2 bars per month

9. "In view of these minimum allocations, private farmers will be compelled to feed their workers partly from their own rations and partly from what they grow on their farms. Thus, it will be impossible for them to give the workers coffee sweetened with sugar. Already in 1952 most of them were compelled to use saccharine because of the small sugar rations. Saccharine is sold unrationed. A box containing 100 small pills costs 30 Kz.

#### Lot of Sovkhoz Worker vs. Kolkhos Worker

10. "The situation of kolkhos members resembles in many ways that of workers employed at State farms. The member's 'share' in the kolkhos is the work he performs during the whole year. He receives only about 40% of his estimated salary; the balance is paid at the end of the year when the overall accounting for the whole kolkhos has been completed. The estimated salary amounts to about 100 Kz. per day. With his part-wage a kolkhos member must buy his food from the kolkhos warehouse the whole year round. He must buy, for example, corn to eat his bread ration, the same way as does a State farm worker. He must make his other purchases in State-owned stores on registration books, the same way as a private farmer.
11. "One of the advantages the kolkhos member has over the worker employed by a State farm is that the small strip of land he has at his disposal grows his own vegetable. In many cases as much as 2 hectares (and only in the few lowermost liberal categories of cooperatives). He is also allowed to raise a small flock of pigs and chickens, one milk cow of his own. From the yield of this he, too, is not compelled to make quota deliveries. (Small private farmers who, like the kolkhos members, are also exempt from such deliveries.)

#### Prospects of Agricultural Crisis

12. "The increasingly strict restrictions and the growing pressure exerted on private farmers by the Communist authorities are already affecting current production results. For the past three years [prior to 1953] private farmers have received, for example, no artificial fertilizers. The increasing difficulties in getting seed and have resulted in a decrease in natural manure, which is now the main fertilizer. Consequently grassland has not been properly cultivated for more than 20 years. On my own farm (2.5 hectares), under almost identical weather conditions I harvested about 115 quintals of hay in 1951, and 109 quintals in 1952. A year or more later I will have to reduce the yield of my natural fertilizers and the productivity of natural manure will show increasing effects on the 1953 crops throughout Czechoslovakia, particularly the corn crop. Potatoes and fodder-beets will be poorer, though they are far more resistant. I believe the crisis in Czechoslovak agriculture will come to a head in 1954 when the hunger of the soil will cause poor results in all kinds of crops. The shortage of fodder will at the same time

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result in a further decrease in animal products.

13. "In addition to the steady decrease in the production of individual farmers (who still cultivate more than 50% of the Czechoslovakia's arable land), the special privileges of kolkhozes and State farms will substantially contribute to this approaching food crisis. Kolkhozes and State farms have to make proportionally much lower quota deliveries than private farmers. While, e.g. a private farmer must deliver from one milk cow 1,250 litres of milk annually, kolkhozes and State farms must deliver only 900 litres per milk cow. Similarly, [ ] a private farmer in Bohemia, had to deliver about 600 kg. of corn per hectare; the nearby kolkhoz delivered only some 137 kg. of corn per hectare. With the steady advance of collectivization more and more private land will be collectivized during the forthcoming years. It is clear that the supply of agricultural products to the market will simultaneously decrease.

Livestock Prices

14. "The following livestock prices were current in February, 1953:

One ox	8,000 Kc.
Three year old milk cow	- 12,000 Kc.
Seven-nine months old colt	- 2,000-3,000 Kc.
Three months old female pig	- 150 Kc. per kg. live weight
Two-three years old sow that can have a litter for two more years	- 8,000 Kc.

The last two prices are interesting: the price of young pigs is much too high in comparison with the price of a sow. The reason for this is that young pigs are in very great demand on the black market, as they can be used to replace good fattened hogs ready for slaughtering. According to existing regulations, 20% of the pigs raised by State farms can be slaughtered after nine months. As there are large numbers of pigs at the State farms, even the control officers who make regular checks are unable to keep exact count. It has become quite a racket to shove during the night a young pig, bought on the black market among the State farm pigs in exchange for a good fat sow. Usually nobody notices the theft. And the sow is slaughtered 'black' on the side. The existence of this racket explains the high price of such 'exchange pigs'."

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